

# The management of stakeholder and public participation at US and binational AOCs: Overcoming challenges and looking beyond delisting

Ryan Holifield, UW-Milwaukee Department of Geography  
Katie Williams, USEPA Office of Research and Development

Areas of Concern Conference, U of M-Dearborn  
March 2-3 2016



## Great Lakes Areas of Concern



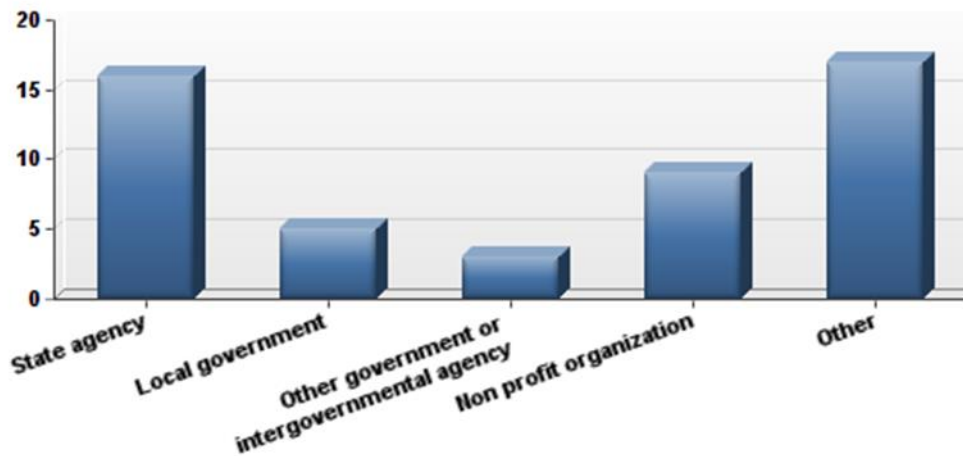
Source: USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office

# Stakeholder participation

- Participation as solution
  - Better, more democratic decisions?
- Participation as problem
  - Costly and inefficient?
- Most studies from before 2000
- Major developments since 2000
  - **Great Lakes Legacy Act (2002)**
    - Focused on contaminated sediments
  - **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (2010-2014)**
    - Much larger pot of funding, for a much wider array of projects

# Methodology

- Survey of AOC Coordinator and C/PAC Chairs
  - Spring 2014
  - 29 US and bi-national AOCs
  - 90 invited
  - 49 completed entire survey



# Methodology

- Interviews
  - Conducted in summer 2014
  - 18 completed
- Interviewees represented
  - State agency AOC Coordinators
  - Local agency Coordinators
  - C/PAC Chairs
  - Academia
  - Canadian officials
- Analysis identified themes



# Major Themes

- Controversy over boundaries
- GLRI is very important
- Heterogeneity is the norm
- The role of the state agency varies across AOCs
- There is no one model for stakeholder and public participation



Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



# Drawing the lines: Controversies over AOC boundaries

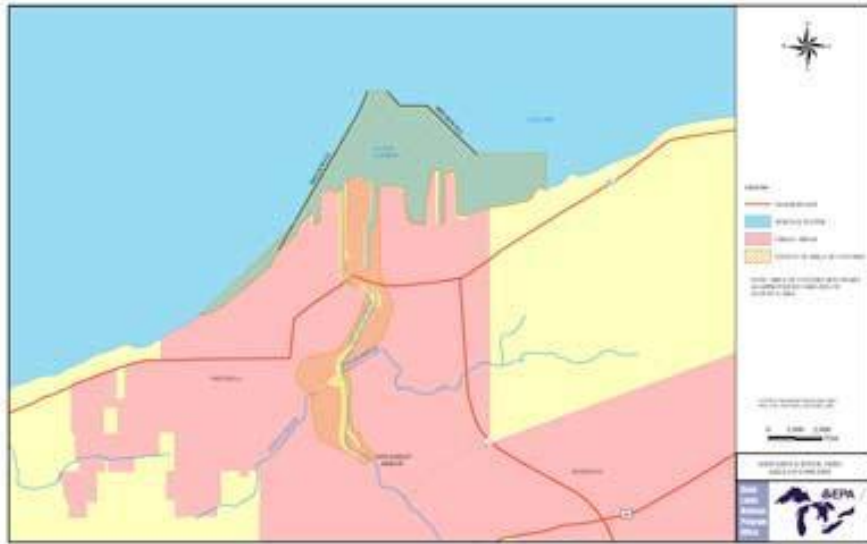


Photo: USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office

- Watershed?
- Bank-to-bank?

*“From what I know that decision was made between EPA and the state. Because one of the questions I was asked by an EPA official when I first started this in this project, how would you find the geographical area of the AOC? And I defined it as the watershed. And I was wrong. And I was told so.”*

# Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

*“As the GLRI came along, the ... what was it... the Great Lakes Action Committee, or Group, that group – as that got going, especially in the upper Midwest, re-energized the RAP process.” (Local agency representative)*

*I think it was a turning point for the Great Lakes in general. For our particular AOC, yes, in some ways, not so much in others. We, we’d made a lot of progress here before the GLRI was passed...the GLRI has, has provided some money that has helped to sustain the state’s support for the Remedial Action Plan. So now we have again staff from DNR, where we didn’t for a while. (PAC representative)*



# Barriers to Stakeholder and Public Participation

- Attracting younger people
- Lack of community awareness
- Lack of funding
- Lack of presence in the community
- Lack of visible activity
- Shifts in policy or priority



Photo: Sioux City Journal

*All of that activity would probably get people's attention, there was plenty press coverage of it locally. But still, I talked to people they had no idea what was going on. (State agency representative)*

# Ingredients for Successful Stakeholder and Public Participation



Photo: Friends of South Shore Park

- Champion or core group
- Connection to the resource
- Creating recreational, educational, or skill development opportunities
- Fostering close relationships and frequent contact
- Relationships with the media or press
- Targeted invitations and meetings of different kinds

# Next steps and further investigation

- Examine the relationships between themes
- Continue to share the results
  - Report
  - Fact sheet(s)
  - Journal articles
  - Other ideas?

*There is no, what I would say, um, consistency of, you know, continual improvement, now on the other hand, if you track from the 1980s up to what we have done now, there is definitely a long term trend of improvement. (PAC Chair)*

# Acknowledgements and Contact information

- Great Lakes National Program Office
- Great Lakes Commission
- Dedicated volunteers and professionals throughout the Great Lakes who took time to talk with us

## For more information

- Ryan Holifield: [holifiel@uwm.edu](mailto:holifiel@uwm.edu)
- Katie Williams: [williams.kathleen@epa.gov](mailto:williams.kathleen@epa.gov)